

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 12, 2012

Agenda Item: Madison Valley Trumpeter Swan Reintroduction

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Endorse Course of Action

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 minutes

Background

Reintroduction of captive-raised trumpeter swans into suitable nesting areas is a proven management tool in use in Montana and neighboring states. FWP proposes to initiate an EA process to assess impacts of multi-year releases of a small number of trumpeters in the middle Madison to reestablish breeding in areas where extensive habitat restoration began in 2005. Swans for release would be obtained from the Wyoming Wetland Society in Jackson, Wyo., the same facility that provided swans for release in Montana's Flathead/Mission and Blackfoot valleys. Most funding for the proposal will be raised by partner contributions from conservation agencies and groups and from the private sector.

Trumpeter Swans

- Historically nested in western Montana valleys but were extirpated from all areas during European settlement. Trumpeter swans for reintroduction into the Tri-State area (Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming) are made available through a cooperative program with the Pacific Flyway Council, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Wyoming Wetland Society.
- Wyoming Wetland Society trumpeters have been released into the wild in Wyoming's Green River watershed, and Montana's Flathead, Mission and Blackfoot valleys. Wild nesting flocks have results after approximately five consecutive years of releases of captive-raised swans. Releases in the Blackfoot began in 2005. In 2011, two of these Blackfoot pairs successfully fledged broods.
- The middle Madison Valley (between Ennis and Quake Lakes) has been the site of significant habitat restoration for the past six years. This work has included funding from FWP, USFWS, Natural Resources Conservation Service, PPL Montana, and others. Collectively, these efforts have restored and enhanced 544 acres of wetlands that were drained in the early 1950s. Restoration of breeding trumpeters to this area is the goal of this proposal.
- FWP is one of three state conservation agencies committed to implementing the Trumpeter Swan Implementation Plan developed by the Pacific Flyway Council. Its aim is to address the general decline in the number of trumpeter swans breeding in southeastern Idaho, western Montana, and northwestern Wyoming. The Madison flock's restoration would contribute to that overall goal.

Public Involvement Process & Results

A formal Environmental Assessment and public scoping would begin pending the commission's agreement to proceed with the EA. Pending generally favorable review, FWP will request commission approval to proceed with releases of about five swans this summer.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP as a partner with Idaho and Wyoming is committed to restoring breeding trumpeters to appropriate habitats within their historic range.

Proposed Motion

I move the FWP Commission endorse the trumpeter swan reintroduction proposal in the Madison and to initiate the formal EA process for the releases as presented.